Pauulu’s Diaspora

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Pharaoh Alymphaa Nkongo was in clear and present danger. It was March 1966, and the twenty-six-year-old could find no escape from the “unmentionable sufferings” of African people. To hear him tell it, the situation at the hands of the “white destroyers” had become unbearable. Internal conflict, external oppression, poverty, confusion, white violence, the shattering of black families, miscegenation, and “hypocritical black women” who helped whites by “draining the life-blood” of black people—all these things had brought him to the doorstep of hell. Nkongo felt the heat but remained a man of faith, even if misguided. Hedged between the nefarious exploits of “white-devils” and black ministers alike, the Howard University alumnus found it a miracle that he had “escaped the clutch of the white look.” He had called on his ancestors to rescue his people from the “death chamber.” His many libations had been spilled to the Gods of the Earth, the Seven Seas, tidal waves, oceans, lightning, thunder, fire, earthquakes, cyclones, hurricanes, tornadoes, storms, wildernesses, and reptiles. Now, from his apartment in Brooklyn, New York, he penned a prayer to former political prisoner and now president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta. On behalf of forty million people of African descent, Nkongo sought immediate help from his Ngos Negosti. This Pharaoh of New York was on a mission to return and save his people. But he needed Kenyatta’s assistance to travel back to Africa.¹

Nkongo’s prayer speaks to the myriad ways in which the black world engaged Africa in meaningful, fascinating, and personal ways. It is unclear if his letter and its attached photo reached his East African father, but it did reach Kwame Nkrumah in Conakry, Guinea. Still, it tugs at the political and cultural significance of Kenya for conceptions of the African Diaspora.

Kamarakafego’s own experiences in Kenya between 1962 and 1967 unravel this idea further. While there, he witnessed the republic’s emergence out of British colonialism. His time in East Africa greatly affected his ideas
about decolonization, environmental justice, and black power. Across the campuses of the University of East Africa (UEA) in Tanganyika, Uganda, and Kenya, Kamarakafego launched his lifelong career of activism in sustainable development and appropriate technology. These experiences would fuel his transformation into a Black Power activist upon his return to the Americas.

Liberia

Kamarakafego returned to Liberia from Bermuda in February 1961. Now based in Monrovia, he served as a rural development volunteer. He continued his relationships with students from Cuttington, who were enraged about the recent assassination of Patrice Lumumba that January, and helped them organize a demonstration at the US embassy.²

Months later, Kamarakafego joined a small group of Liberians, Ghanaians, and Nigerians who were agitating against the economic exploitation of Liberia’s working class, decrying the low wages, long hours, and terrible working conditions across the country. After starting as a protest among laborers in the rubber economy, the strike spread to longshoremen, dockworkers, and other sectors of the workforce. The group sought to stimulate industrial action through the unions, but they faced a major roadblock: the president-general of Liberia’s Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was President Tubman’s son, William Tubman Jr. To circumvent this potential obstacle, the collective decided to take action while Tubman was out of the country celebrating his recent marriage in August 1961.³

On Monday, September 11, over fifteen thousand workers launched a general strike in Monrovia, the largest in Liberia’s history. Their demonstration began at Tubman Stadium. According to the Liberian Age, this was the city’s “greatest display of labor force,” and never before had the city been in “such an uproar.” Marchers protested in the streets. All shops were closed, building projects ceased, and activities at the Free Port were put on standstill. Monday’s usual calm had been purportedly interrupted by pandemonium. The “seemingly leaderless and not well organized” demonstration turned into a “mass stampede.” Thousands advanced to the executive mansion. Bayonets drawn, mansion guards drove the crowd away, injuring a few strikers in the process. Two soldiers were disarmed and their rifles broken into pieces.⁴

Liberia’s Listener reported that the labor outburst had “paralyzed all businesses, houses, industries and building projects” in Monrovia. Tubman
unsuccessfully ordered the strikers to return to work; strikers were now protesting the arrests of two CIO officers, whose detentions only served to increase tensions. Management had refused to meet with labor leaders over disputes for some time. For example, workers had made appeals to Firestone to increase wages for months. The *Liberian Age* claimed that on the way to the stadium, “the power of mobocracy went to the heads of some and lawlessness became rampant.” Workers were “dragged out of their working places, citizens . . . molested, private property molested,” and taxi drivers forced out of their cars. The “mobocracy was traveling in its only direction—terror.” To curtail such “hooliganism” and to protect public lives and private property, the government deployed soldiers and police to the stadium. Special service troops fired tear gas into the crowd.5

About one hundred workers at the magnificent Ducor Palace Hotel went on strike. Overlooking Monrovia Harbor, the Ducor was heralded as “Africa’s Waldorf Astoria.” Only months before it had hosted Tubman’s Monrovia conference and was lauded as Africa’s *Palais des Presidents* and the “landmark of African Unity and Solidarity.” Its laborers, who put in ten to twelve hours a day for meagerly monthly stipends of between $25 and $30 while their white counterparts earned “soaring salaries,” thought otherwise.6 They demanded better wages and an end to the discriminatory practices inflicted upon them by white managers. Tubman called off the two-hour strike after “establishing a basis for negotiation.”

One employee of the Liberian Mining Company complained of having made 49¢ an hour since 1951, though he taught foreigners to operate machinery. Workers at the United States Trading Company’s garage, a subsidiary of Firestone and one of Liberia’s largest wholesalers and importers, had already been on strike for about a week. The company distributed American vehicles, soft drinks, and even Liberia’s staple food, rice; decades before, Du Bois had decried its connection to Firestone.7 According to Martinus Johnson, “historians have yet to explain Firestone’s role as the dominant employer for many decades, the degrading and inhumane lease agreement and its devastating effect on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Liberians who worked for twenty-five cents per day.” For Johnson, such conditions hastened “the call for revolt.” The US trading company ran two sections, one for native Liberians and one for Americans. The inequalities were visible in housing, where “white employees lived in beautiful red and white bungalows, while local employees lived in brick huts” with squatting toilet facilities.8

In response to the strike, the *Liberian Age* questioned if “communism
had arrived.” At a labor conference, President Tubman listened to the grievances of the strikers and promised to establish an arbitration commission through which labor could express its grievances for the best interests of “all parties concerned.” He urged the strikers to return to work, claiming that their action was “an outrage of decency and disregard for law and order by officers and members of the CIO.” He stressed that the government would not permit “lawless citizens” to do so.9

Power is predictable. As Tubman was promising labor a venue to express its concerns, the legislature was simultaneously moving to restore an emergency power act targeting antigovernment conspiracies that would suspend habeas corpus and allow arrests without warrants and detentions without bail. The act also declared any activity organized by Liberians or foreign nationals to disturb the socioeconomic stability of Liberia by influencing or inciting strikes or violence to be a felony.10 Tubman, meanwhile, promised his civil servants priority in raises over other groups of employees. At a rally, he proclaimed that “95 percent of the population is in favor of our policy” and stated that he would not be deterred by a “small dissident group of ingrates and malcontents.” Africa was facing a “day of resurrection,” he proclaimed, and he would not permit dissidents to alter Liberia’s course.11 While assuring workers that their grievances would receive due consideration, Tubman ordered soldiers to arrest the leaders of the union, and he armed his military machine with more troops and weapons.12

The year 1961 saw more strikes in Liberia than in all years prior. At least thirteen persons were arrested in a supposed plot to overthrow the government and establish a communist regime. Tubman claimed that a communist “underground movement” was organizing the strikes. He declared that Liberia had been infiltrated by “organized underground experimental movements designed at subversion, sedition, and treason with intent to undermine and overthrow the Government by craft, artifice and subversive anti-Liberian activities.” He further asserted that the strikes were instigated by “a small dissident group of malcontent citizens,” including students and foreigners.13

The government blamed the strike on two different plots. A Booker T. Bracewell was found disguised as a woman and arrested. The Liberian Secret Service claimed that he had tried to obtain $1 million from the Soviet Union to establish a communist regime in Liberia. He was caught allegedly trying to escape to Conakry, Guinea.14 Another group was said to have been organized around a secretary of the Ghanaian embassy, J. A. Boateng. Boateng had supposedly indoctrinated the group with the idea that “indigenous
“tribes” were the “real owners of Liberia” and that the America-Liberians were the same as white colonialists and needed to be expelled. Boateng reportedly offered the group assistance in getting to Ghana, where they would be given passports to travel to Moscow to be trained in guerrilla warfare. This was to enable them to return to Liberia to “stage a revolution to take over the government.” Another Liberian, William Appleton, had already escaped to Moscow.15

Given Kamarakafego’s account, it appears that he was affiliated with Boateng’s group. He states that Tubman issued arrest warrants for the Liberians who had organized the strike, who were to be captured “dead or alive.” As the strike organizers fled the country, Liberian soldiers fired upon them in pursuit. In one tense moment, a bullet grazed Kamarakafego. Traveling primarily by foot, they were certainly grateful for the two rides they were able to secure—one by truck and the other by donkey cart. Eventually, they reached neighboring Côte D’Ivoire.16

According to Gay, the group of Tanganyikan and Southern African students also fled Liberia through Guinea. They had come to the country to “find freedom, but had found instead a severely undeveloped neo-colonial Liberia run by an old-line capitalist president with strong American ties.” Eventually, they went to various universities in the Soviet Union and neighboring satellite countries.17

Two weeks later, Kamarakafego’s group reached Ghana. While there, Kwame Nkrumah hosted them at his residence. He had first met Nkrumah, along with journalist and author George Padmore, in 1953 at C. L. R. James’s residence in London. In Ghana, he met political luminaries such as Du Bois, Shirley Graham Du Bois, and Nelson Mandela.18 Following Nkrumah’s advice, Kamarakafego continued on to Kenya.

The Black World Needs a Mau Mau

Gerald Horne’s *Mau Mau in Harlem* demonstrates the significance of the Mau Mau (Kenyan Land and Freedom Army) uprisings in the conceptions of African American liberation struggles in the 1950. It also highlights the colonial violence that the British inflicted on Kenya’s African population through violence, political imprisonment in its gulags.19 The Mau Mau uprisings also inspired black political struggle in the Caribbean. For example, Horace Campbell’s *Rasta and Resistance* argued that Jamaica’s Rastafari community grew locks after seeing photographs of Mau Mau guerillas, such as Dedan Kimathi, donning them.20
Kenya and the Mau Mau were no strangers to Bermuda. In 1952, the *Bermuda Recorder* refused to believe that the Mau Mau was a “murderous anti-white African movement” and denounced their sensationalism in the Western press. The paper saw the stories as being “encouraged by white settlers” to “distort the true situation and smash any movement for African progress.” The world, stated the *Recorder*, was “asked to believe that 30,000 Europeans” lived in terror. It questioned if the special powers against uprisings and the ruthless internment of the Mau Mau were necessary. For A. B. Place, editor of the *Recorder* and former member of the UNIA, the answer was not repression, but black self-government.\(^{21}\)

The *Recorder* also noted that numbers of Kikuyu, who had initiated the Mau Mau movement, were arrested, while blacks in South Africa were being shot and killed by police. By late 1952, the Mau Mau uprising was front-page news, but the *Recorder*’s perception of the movement was less than flattering. One article characterized the movement as being fundamentally atavistic and a primeval, superstitious, barbaric cult that was not only anti-white but also anti-twentieth century and dedicated to destruction. Interestingly, the piece was actually written in defense of uprisings in South Africa in denouncing a report comparing such “riots” to the Mau Mau.\(^{22}\)

In 1953, the *Recorder* printed an article about a thousand Kikuyu women who had petitioned Queen Elizabeth to preserve their rights as women and whose husbands and sons were now being arrested and placed in forced labor camps that had been set up to fight the Mau Mau rebellion, where police were brutalizing them. Such coverage continued into the 1960s. The *Recorder* specifically marked the activities of Thomas Mboya, Kenyatta, and the Kenyan African National Union (KANU). In April 1961, it reprinted a *New York Herald* article in which Mboya denounced Kenyatta’s imprisonment, racism, and British colonialism.\(^{23}\)

Bermuda also “consumed” Kenya and East Africa through movies like *Simba* (1954) and *Safari* (1956), which were based on the Mau Mau uprising. Both films featured the island’s own Earl Cameron, who played a Kikuyu doctor (in *Simba*) and a Mau Mau leader (in *Safari*). The *Recorder* covered Cameron’s role in *Simba*, which was filmed in Kenya, purportedly during an actual military operation against the Mau Mau. In the summer of 1957, *Safari* played in Bermuda’s Island Theatre and New Opera House. In 1960, Cameron acted in the movie *Killers of Kilimanjaro*, set in Tanganyika, which was also shown in Bermuda.\(^{24}\)

Beyond these media representations, Kamarakafego reflected a direct linkage between Bermuda, Kenya, and East Africa. Recall that it was
Nkrumah who had suggested that Kamarakafego head to East Africa to help the region in “its struggle against imperial powers.” Kenyatta arrived in Kenya in 1962, only a year after having been released from political imprisonment, where he then led KANU to victory in the national elections in 1963. Kenya proclaimed political independence months later.

According to Ruth Stutts Njiiri, Kenya’s “freedom from colonialism brought forth the need for a new racial composition in Kenya’s Civil Service.” This process of decolonization was driven by what Kenyatta called an unapologetic process of Africanization. An extension of KANU’s manifesto, this “vitally urgent” process involved the government’s displacement of non-Kenyans by qualified Kenyans in the public service. This “great transformation” required the training of as many young Kenyans as possible. As such, Kenya became a critical space from which national questions of indigenous education, decolonization, science and technology, pan-Africanism, sustainable development, and self-determination were being raised in Africa. The UEA played a central role in this process. Founded in 1962, the university was federated with satellite campuses across Kampala, Uganda (Makerere), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (University College), Nairobi, and Kenya (University College). The challenging work of these institutions included the production of schoolteachers across disciplines.

To be an educator of African descent in Kenya was to be a “sufferer.” Such teachers had long launched complaints about teaching conditions. In the early 1950s, the British colonial administration government garnered 7.5 percent of the pay of African teachers to ostensibly provide them with housing. The Nyanza African Teachers Union challenged this, noting that this had a negative impact on African education. In urban areas, African teachers also paid rent to landlords in addition to the house rent. Such policies directly impacted local interest in becoming a teacher.

In 1960, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) produced a telling report on the teaching of science in Kenya. It noted that secondary education was compulsory until the age of fifteen for all European and Asian children (not African) in Nairobi and Mombasa. Kenya had different directors for African, Asian, and European education. Uganda’s Makerere College was the only center that trained secondary-school science teachers. This program ended in 1963, and it was left to Kenya’s Ministry of Education to train its science teachers. In 1962, the Ford Foundation agreed to fund short courses to upgrade teachers who were willing to teach science. Refresher courses in biology, chemistry, and physics were also being offered.
It was also hoped that Nairobi’s newly established Royal Polytechnic would be able, with Ford funding, to train students to be artisans and craftsmen through its applied science departments. The school was being supported by a special UN fund after UNESCO reported that the number of science teachers was inadequate. In European schools, there were thirty-seven graduates, in African schools, forty-two graduates, and in Arab and Asian schools, ninety-two graduates. The UNESCO report claimed that little had been done to “popularize science in Kenya,” where “the desire for knowledge for its own sake was yet to be achieved.” Still, the author claimed that science should not be presented as being alien to any culture and that it should have been projected as being “relevant to the life of the people” and “not as an example of twentieth century magic.”

For someone like Kamarakafego, whose political and scientific pursuits were interlinked, all this made Kenya an ideal location in which to work.

True to form, Kamarakafego had friends in Kenya. This included Philip Githinji and Gikonyo Julius Kiano, whom he had met in California while he was studying at California Institute of Technology (CIT). Githinji earned a BS in mechanical engineering from CIT in 1961 and was Kenya’s first indigenous professor in mechanical engineering. He also studied at Baltimore’s historic black university, Morgan State University. Storied nationalist Julius Kiano was Kenya’s first PhD—awarded in political science at the University of California, Berkeley in 1956—and was a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. He had also studied at Antioch College, where he dated Coretta Scott (later, Scott King).

Kamarakafego was met at Nairobi’s airport by Githinji, with whom he stayed for several weeks. The families and communities of these men intro-
duced Kamarakafego to Nairobi’s social, political, and cultural worlds. This included a community of African American women like Catherine Mbathi, Ernestine Hammond (wife of Kiano), and Ruth Stutts Njiiri. Kamarakafego would later befriend the pioneer of African Diaspora studies, professor Joseph E. Harris, who codified the Diaspora as a field of study at Tanzania’s First International Congress of African Historians Conference in 1965. In 1972, Harris was a visiting professor and head of the University of Nairobi’s History Department. Here he taught classes on Africa and the African Diaspora, particularly in the Middle East. Kamarakafego met and spent a lot of time with Harris, his wife Rosemarie (Pressley), and their children in Kenya; the two became lifelong intellectual comrades. According to Harris, Kamarakafego expressed concern that US authorities had placed him under surveillance; this he sought to address by communicating with Harris through cryptic messages, secretive phone calls, and discreet meetings.

Kamarakafego’s hosts played key roles in Kenya’s liberation struggle. Kiano was Kenya’s first minister for commerce and industry. Along with Mboya and Oginga Odinga, he had formed and led the Kenyan Independence Movement (KANU’s precursor). Radicalized by politicized Kenyan veterans of World War II, Kiano entered the United States committed to challenging colonialism. At the University of California, Berkeley, he studied comparative colonial liberation in Asia and Africa. To the chagrin of British administrators, in the United States, he was a vocal advocate of the Mau Mau uprisings. Kiano conducted political education across the country. For example, in 1958, he debated white political leader Michael Blundell in front of a rural audience of about 250 Kikuyu farm laborers. He informed them that Africans should lead Kenya, and he demanded universal suffrage for all individuals. He argued that the white-dominated highlands needed to be opened to Africans but not necessarily to Asians. Garnering much applause from his audience, he exclaimed in Kikuyu that Africans had a special right to land. Next to Kiano was his wife Ernestine Hammond Kiano.

Hammond Kiano was a thriving entrepreneur. A former nurse in the United States and organizer of the YWCA, in 1964 she became the first Kenyan-based US citizen to renounce her citizenship. She and Kiano had married in the United States, and her time in Kenya was full of opportunities and challenges. Tall, brilliant, striking, and fearless, Hammond Kiano decried the racism and segregation that awaited them in Kenya. In 1963 she organized an “emancipation of Kenyan woman” seminar that called for increased political rights for Kenyan women. She bought 176 acres of land in Kabete as British settlers departed the country. She was also the business
manager of the Competent Commercial College, which taught shorthand, typing, office administration, and English. Hammond Kiano then transformed the college into a private school.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1961, Ralph Bunche visited Nairobi after attending Tanganyika’s independence celebrations. According to the US officials based in Kenya, Bunche met with the Kianos and agreed to help raise funds for the college. By 1962, the school was renamed as the Ralph Bunche Academy. In 1962, the US Department of State reported that G. Kiano had left Kenya for New York as a guest of the American Society of African Culture. He was there to raise money for the academy.\textsuperscript{36}

Ernestine Hammond’s relationship with Kiano would not last. After a number of public personal clashes—one in which she hurled her shoe at Kiano when she found him having a drink with an attractive woman at the pristine Nairobi club—she was deported from Kenya. The \textit{Kenya Gazette} simply read: “Ernestine Hammond Kiano had shown herself by act and speech to be disloyal and disaffected towards Kenya.”\textsuperscript{37}

In the summer of 1963, Kamarakafego passed through Bermuda with his wife, Betty Browne. According to the \textit{Recorder}, he was “going by a tongue twisting African name that he did not want publicized.” Kamarakafego informed the paper that he did not want to be and was no longer a Bermudian—“I am an African now.” He told the \textit{Recorder} that he was heading back to Kenya to take over as principal of the Ralph Bunche Academy. Like Hammond Kiano, he planned to give up his British passport when he got there. He was traveling with a reference letter from the aforementioned CIT professor of biology, Albert Tyler, addressed to Kiano at the Academy.\textsuperscript{38} The letter primarily spoke to his research at CIT, stating that he had “learned many new chemical and biological techniques” for research in chemical biology. According to Tyler, this showed that Kamarakafego, whose work included protein synthesis and tumor development in the development of animal eggs, was capable of advanced scientific work. With all of Kamarakafego’s potential, Tyler regretted that the couple had left California.\textsuperscript{39}

Hammond and her close friend Stutts Njiiri were intricately involved in the Kenya airlifts program that brought Kenyan students to US colleges and universities between 1959 and 1961. Stutts Njiiri served as secretary to Reverend James Robinson, the founder of Operation Crossroads Africa. She was married to Kenyan political leader Kariuki Karanja Njiiri, who forfeited his parliamentary seat to allow Kenyatta to join Parliament. She then worked as Kenyatta’s personal secretary throughout the 1960s. Her 1974 dissertation, “Kenya and North America: Educational Comparisons of their Black
Populations”—completed in the Education Department of the University of Massachusetts Amherst—was based partly on these experiences. Stutts Njiiri would later work for the Phelps-Stokes Foundation, where she directed its International Education Program.40

Stutts Njiiri invited Kamarakafego and Nairobi’s small community of black repatriates to a meeting with Malcolm X on October 22, 1964. This was Omowale’s second trip to Africa, and he was traveling through Nairobi on his return from making Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. In Nairobi, he also sat with Kenyatta and Vice President Oginga Odinga, whose international anti-imperialism caused grave concern among US officials.41

The group met at the home of Cathy Mbathi, African American wife of Titus Mbathi, permanent secretary of Kenya’s Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. The Detroit-born Mbathi was a gospel singer who had been a featured artist with Mississippi’s Cotton Blossom Singers. In Kenya, she produced a gospel album—*Cathy Mbathi Singing Your Favorite Negro Spirituals*, recorded in Kiswahili with Kenya’s Rift Valley Academy Chorale. She also regularly performed in concerts and appeared on Nairobi television and radio.42

Kamarakafego had first met Malcolm X in California in the fall of 1958, when he attended one of the minister’s speeches at Los Angeles City College. In 1957, Malcolm had founded the Nation of Islam’s Temple No. 27 in Los Angeles. He frequently held meetings at Normandie Hall, some five miles from the City College. Kamarakafego went to the lecture with three of his City College friends who hailed from Kenya, Zaire, and Uganda. They briefly conversed with Malcolm X after his lecture. Kamarakafego informed Malcolm X of his studies at CIT. Malcolm X responded, “That’s good. . . . We need science people.” Kamarakafego was certainly inspired by his vote of confidence in his focus on science.43

Now in Kenya, Malcolm remembered Kamarakafego from this brief meeting, remarking kindly, “You are a far way from where you were.” According to Kamarakafego, Malcolm X asked him if he wanted to address a Black Power conference that he was planning with Adam Clayton Powell. Kamarakafego declined, but the Black Power movement was certainly in his future.44

Malcolm X was keen to meet with Nairobi’s black repatriate community. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) monitored this assembly. Noting that there were about twelve persons in attendance, an agency report of the event corroborates Kamarakafego’s accounts that Malcolm X discussed his current clashes with the Nation of Islam, his newly formed Organization
of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), and the civil rights struggle. The CIA claimed that Malcolm X informed the group that he was trying to modify his public image as a “racist” and now maintained that white persons were not inherently evil. In addition, the OAAU would cease its public attacks on “moderate” black organizations in an effort to achieve greater racial unity. He rejected nonviolence and passive resistance as being ineffective and incapable of halting racial discrimination in the United States. As such, he advocated greater reliance on violence as a means of self-defense against white bigots. Significantly, Malcolm X also encouraged African Americans in Nairobi to organize themselves “into a militant pressure group” and to speak out “publicly about the lack of real progress in eradicating prejudice” against African Americans. This, he argued, was because the United States could be embarrassed abroad for its racial troubles. Such embarrassment might lead to greater efforts to abolish racism domestically.

The CIA shared this report with the FBI, which described Malcolm X as an anarchist who could not look beyond “the struggle and chaos that he desired.” Malcolm reportedly said that all efforts to give blacks in the United States more access to courts were hypocritical and designed to give black people a false sense of progress. He spoke “charitably” of the violence used by younger blacks against police brutality. Similarly, he expressed great admiration for the Mau Mau uprisings, whose boldness he contrasted with the “feebleness” of black movements in South Africa. His affinity toward violence stemmed from his “deep feeling for the suffering and lack of human dignity of the twenty-two million Negroes in the United States.”

As Kamarakafego would recall, Malcolm X informed the group that he had left the Nation of Islam and that he no longer had infallible faith in Elijah Muhammad. Still, he maintained that Islam was a building force for African people. Malcolm X also talked about Rastafari repatriation to Africa. One version of the CIA report states that he rejoiced over the movement; another version asserts that he rejected it. The report also claimed that he challenged the idea of partitioning America into white and black regions. His purpose for the trip was to seek the support of African leaders, but he insisted that African Americans “had become completely different from Africans in Africa” and needed to be judged in isolation. Problems aside, this report speaks to the international surveillance of Malcolm X and black freedom movements.

Malcolm X’s speeches upon his return to the United States speak to his experiences in Kenya. In December 1964, he introduced Fannie Lou Hamer to a New York audience. He began by praising the Student Nonviolent Co-
ordinating Committee’s (SNCC) Freedom Singers performance of the song “Oginga Odinga.” He also described Kenyatta, Odinga, and the Mau Mau as perhaps being the “greatest African patriots and freedom fighters that that continent” would ever know.⁴⁹

He continued:

You and I can best learn how to get real freedom by studying how Kenyatta brought it to his people in Kenya, and how Odinga helped him, and the excellent job that was done by the Mau Mau freedom fighters. In fact, that’s what we need in Mississippi. In Mississippi we need a Mau Mau. In Alabama we need a Mau Mau. In Georgia we need a Mau Mau. Right here in Harlem, in New York City, we need a Mau Mau.⁵⁰

These kinds of political experiences in East Africa were transformative for Kamarakafego. While witnessing Kenya’s mass movement for independence, he also experienced the lingering legacies of colonialism. Being harassed by white and black policemen while smelling flowers at the elite Nairobi club reminded him of Bermuda’s own segregated yacht club. Githinji then suggested he get an identity card, including a photograph and fingerprint; this reminded him of South Africa’s ID passes for blacks.⁵¹

Kamarakafego was moved by how closely racism in Kenya resembled his experiences in Bermuda. Whites represented less than 1 percent of Kenya’s population but had over eight secondary schools; Kenyans had access to only three.⁵² He sought to make change in Kenya by pushing for racial change and self-determination through its education system.

In Kenya, Kamarakafego’s work-related activities were multifaceted. He led annual orientation programs for Peace Corps science teachers, and he organized yearly track meets for the Kenya Secondary School Sports Association, taught science part-time in secondary schools, and organized annual science exhibitions. When Kamarakafego first arrived in Kenya, Githinji was a lecturer in thermodynamics at the University of Nairobi. Through Githinji’s advice, Kamarakafego applied for and received a three-year lectureship in biological science and ecology there. As part of the ecology program, he conducted research in one of Kenya’s game parks.⁵³

At UEA, Kamarakafego designed and introduced a PhD program in ecology. While there, he also became involved in UNESCO’s efforts to establish an East African environment program. Kamarakafego became a UN consultant on the environment, a hat he would wear in various capacities throughout the rest of his life.⁵⁴

Kamarakafego joined the Curriculum Development Center for Science
Teaching, which was formed in 1961. He joined a team of science teachers who were rewriting O and A levels syllabi in physics, chemistry, and biology for East African secondary schools. These curricula had been decidedly colonial. Through the aforementioned Ford Foundation program, he organized ecological workshops and refresher courses for science teachers. He also taught biology, created teaching aids, apparatus, and instructional materials, and rewrote a biology syllabus for a new East African certificate of education.55

In 1966, the Center for Science combined with its English and mathematics counterparts to create a Curriculum Development and Research Center. In 1966, these merged into the Kenya Institute of Education, which, according to Stutts Njiiiri, developed new methodologies for teaching (such as in mathematics) while also advising the government on Africanizing the curriculum. This was critical, as colonial education had not focused on arts, history, music, and science for African students. There remained a heavy demand in Kenya for engineers, surveyors, teachers, and technicians.56

Just after independence, the Kenya Education Committee produced a critical report on education. Led by Simeon H. Ominde, the committee was charged with developing a curriculum that “appropriately expressed the aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country.” It pushed for policies that would appraise historical facts and history from an African perspective. Essentially, it was to find a balance in African education between modernization and “the assertion of the African character.” Its curriculum was also to be based on national unity instead of separation and segregation—a far cry from colonial policies that had distinct tracks for African, Asian, Arab, and European students.57

Kamarakafego became involved in this process. In 1966, he advised Kenya’s minister of education, Jeremiah J. M. Nyagah, in the government’s efforts to develop its public education system. A critical issue was that the three segregated secondary schools that were preserved for black Kenyans could not absorb the thousands of African children who graduated from primary schools. Kamarakafego’s recommendations included allowing Kenyans into all schools and to build new high schools. He pushed Nyagah to focus specifically on the production of black science teachers, prodding him with the following question: What would be the logic of Kenya gaining independence and inviting the colonial master back to run the country because it had no “scientific technocrats?” He suggested that Kenya establish a teacher’s science college.58

This last effort was not in vain. In 1966, Kenya and Sweden (through
a Swedish foreign aid program, the International Development Authority) built the tuition-free Kenya Science Teachers College. Kenyatta laid the foundation stone of the college, which was to “train men and women—irrespective of race, color and creed—as secondary school teachers in science subjects,” particularly in math, physics, chemistry, biology, and geography. The college’s initial teachers were all Swedish, with the idea that it would eventually transition to being run by Kenyan faculty.⁵⁹

Kamarakafego’s technological expertise blossomed in Kenya. While lecturing at UEA, he completed his manual on building water tanks using bamboo and cement. The tanks were designed to be constructed in three days. Kamarakafego’s main aim was to assist as many people as possible—particularly those living in rural areas—to gain reserves of fresh water. The manual’s second edition was published in various languages through the UN Development Program and eventually globally distributed free of charge.⁶⁰

Kamarakafego understood access to fresh water as being essential to life, environment, personal usage, and development. He had begun development of the water-tank design while in Liberia at Cuttington. For him, the harnessing of fresh water was connected to questions of black self-determination. Kamarakafego’s sustainable water-tank design spread across the Global South through reprints of the manual and rural technology workshops that he launched across the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific. He argued that “the young people and particularly women throughout the world in rural areas of Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific, are usually the fetchers and carriers of water.” As such, he stressed that women should always be involved in rural technology workshops.⁶¹

**Back to Bermuda**

During Kamarakafego’s time in Kenya, the era of party politics had been born in Bermuda. In 1963 the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) was founded as the mainstream embodiment of the political desires of the black working class. In response, Henry Tucker and Bermuda’s white oligarchy formed the United Bermuda Party (UBP) in 1964 to protect its interests.⁶²

The soon-to-be leader of the PLP was Kamarakafego’s cousin, Lois Browne-Evans. Browne-Evans’s interests in African freedom were self-evident. In 1963, she had traveled to Nigeria to celebrate its independence. Kamarakafego visited her in London for a Nigerian Independence Day party. In the summer of 1967, Kamarakafego received calls from Browne-Evans and PLP stalwart architect Wilfred Allen encouraging him to return
to Bermuda to assist the party in the upcoming 1968 elections—the first to be held in Bermuda based on universal adult suffrage. After some thought, he agreed to do so. Browne reached Bermuda in August 1967. Shortly after his arrival, he informed the *Bermuda Recorder* that he was ready to stand for the PLP. When asked about his political philosophy since his time in Africa, Kamarakafego stated that he believed that Bermudians needed to work together for the benefit of Bermudians. Bermuda had always had a “superficial harmony,” which he called crocodile grinning and “show-case integrating.”

In September, Kamarakafego was elected as a branch leader of the PLP. In October, the PLP announced that he had been appointed as organizer of the party, suggesting that he was responsible for the creation of universal adult suffrage in the island. He became heavily involved in the PLP’s grassroots election campaign. In September, he spoke at an outdoor rally. There he commented that future rallies would deal with the issue of victimization, particularly around the government’s attacks on PLP supporters. This rally, he asserted, would take place “within earshot of the Government House.” Unfortunately, Governor Martonmere would be away; had he stayed, Kamarakafego promised, “he would hear a thing or two.”

The PLP’s 1967 political platform included full political independence, economic empowerment for the people of Bermuda, and a free medical and healthcare scheme. In February 1968, Kamarakafego formed the PLP Youth Wing in an effort to further politicize Bermuda’s radicalized black youth. In this era, these youth were beginning to challenge racism, police brutality, and colonialism through the language and aesthetics of the Black Power movement. In April 1968, after being racially discriminated against and denied entry into a fair, youths from the “Back-of-Town” area of the capital city, Hamilton, spontaneously clashed with the majority British Police Force. This swiftly transformed into a weekend-long organized uprising through urban guerilla warfare and arson attacks on white establishments. The British government sent a company of 180 Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers to suppress the rebellion, marking the first in a number of occasions between 1968 and 1977 when British troops were sent to suppress Black Power–related incidents. Even as Kamarakafego and Browne-Evans took to the streets in an effort to calm things down, the PLP was blamed for uprisings.

Kamarakafego convinced some of these “Back-of-Town” youth to join the PLP Youth Wing. While the party did not win the May 1968 elections, he was elected as a member of Parliament (MP) in the constituency of Pembroke East. Along with PLP leaders Arthur Hodgson, Elvina Warner, and
Freddy Wade, he actively supported Black Power’s growth in the island. In 1967, PLP leaders attended the Second National Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey.\(^\text{67}\)

In 1968, Kamarakafego attended the Third National Black Power Conference in Philadelphia, whose organizers included Chuck Stone and brothers Benjamin and Nathan Wright. Malcolm X had previously informed these men about Kamarakafego’s work in Kenya, which prompted them to ask Kamarakafego to address the conference. He was introduced by Zambia’s Isaac Monday as “Theodore Brown,” an organizer for Bermuda’s all-black PLP. Stating that the British government had sent troops to Bermuda during the recent election, Monday noted that he was fighting against white minority rule in the island.\(^\text{68}\)

Kamarakafego was not one for speeches. He greeted the audience with “a salaam alaikum,” stating that he did not like to talk much but liked to “do things.” He brought greetings from the black people of Bermuda, remarking that a Black Power conference would be held in the island in 1970. Kamarakafego stated that such talks were necessary to help black people across the world become aware of their similar problems with white oppression. He also warned that “whether whites were communists, capitalists, or other oppressors,” whenever they gave black people freedom they always “left [behind] some people” who would continue to enslave blacks “to perpetuate the white man’s way.” He was also placed on the advisory board for a 1969 national conference on Black Power. According to both the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the FBI, “extremists” at the conference gave instructions in urban guerilla tactics, the manufacture of explosives, incendiary bombs, and booby traps.” Officials of the FCO also noted that Kamarakafego was nominated to be the Caribbean’s regional Black Power organizer.\(^\text{69}\)

In January 1969, National Black Power Conference leaders announced that Kamarakafego would host the first international Black Power conference in Bermuda that following summer. In a lengthy press conference, Kamarakafego informed the Bermuda Recorder and the Royal Gazette that he was a member of the committee and that the conference would include Black Power representatives from across the Atlantic. In Bermuda, he stressed, Black Power was an anti-colonial movement. Bermuda could not remain a colony forever under white domination or British exploitation; Blacks in Bermuda had a right to self-determination. He drew on his experience in East Africa, stating how in Kenya it had taken the Mau Mau uprisings to force the colonial whites to recognize that Africans meant that
they intended to rule themselves. In Detroit, Watts, Newark, and Harlem, it took “Burn, Baby, Burn.” What would it take in Bermuda?  

Kamarakafego was publicly and politically harassed for his Black Power advocacy. At Bermuda’s annual Speaker’s Dinner, for example, an event that included an address by Bermuda’s governor, Kamarakafego wore the gown of a Liberian Kpelle paramount chief rather than the traditional tuxedo. A black UBP MCP, Quinton Edness, asked him where he was going in his pajamas. Kamarakafego’s retort has provided the title for this chapter: “Let me tell you something, all of Africa is on my back and all of you should be f—king lucky that I wore this to a dumb a— event like this.”  

As evidenced in my book *Black Power in Bermuda*, the British, Bermudian, Canadian, and US governments collaborated in an attempt to sabotage the Bermuda conference. The US State Department noted that Kamarakafego’s had a large following among Bermuda’s black youth and that he was “actively recruiting” black radicals from the United States. The FCO and its Information and Research Department (IRD) sought information from Britain’s M15 and M16 and US officials about “Black Power organizations, advocates, and activities in the Caribbean and US.” With the assistance of the FBI, Bermuda created a stop list of black radicals to prevent them from entering Bermuda.  

Lord Malcom Shepherd, British minister of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, informed the British governor of Bermuda, Lord Martonmere, that the British Defense Department would happily “arrange” for a vessel to have “engine trouble” off Bermuda during the conference. British troops were stationed on the island, and the Canadian government placed two warships in Bermuda’s waters during the talks. News of this spread far and wide; for example, Russia’s daily newspaper *Izvestia* noted that the British frigate was there to patrol the conference.  

At the behest of the FCO, the UBP implemented a Race Relations Act to attack the Black Power conference. During the debate over the bill, Kamarakafego was suspended from Parliament. While speaking in defense of the conference, UBP MPs disrespectfully told him to “shut up and sit down.” Kamarakafego refused to be silenced, retorting, “Which one of you bastards is going to sit me down?” He looked at Henry Tucker, who stood over six feet tall, and said, “Are you going to sit me down, an old shriveled up bastard like you?” As he recalled:  

When [Henry Tucker] . . . looked challengingly at me, I put my fist in his face and he ducked under the desk. Moving from desk to desk, I
asked several people the same question. No one said anything. Then I went to where the mace was and knocked it off the desk.75

When recalling this story in 2002 to students at Bermuda’s Cedarbridge Academy, Kamarakafego added that Tucker’s size meant little to him. “You could be as big as a house, it makes no matter to me.” The Speaker of the House asked him to leave. On his way out, another white MP said, “Look at him, that arrogant thing swearing in the Queen’s House.” Kamarakafego then exclaimed, “F*** the Queen, that syphilitic whore!”76

Held July 10–13, the Bermuda conference aimed to formally launch the Black Power movement in the Caribbean. It also sought “to help Black people achieve political, economic, educational, and cultural Black power” across the world. After canvassing across seventeen countries for the talks, Kamarakafego expected the international conference to attract participants from the Caribbean, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere.77

The talks also demonstrated the genealogical intersections between the Black Power and Pan African Movements. Veteran pan-Africanists like C.L.R. James, Queen Mother Audley Moore, and Kwame Nkrumah supported the talks. Moore led a workshop on Black women. Despite the implementation of immigration restrictions to sabotage the conference, well-known activists like Acklyn Lynch, Florence Kennedy, Fernando Henriques, and Yosef Ben-Jochannan managed to participate.78

In front of a crowd of some two thousand at the Pembroke Hamilton Club’s football stadium, James opened the conference with a ringing speech. James placed Black Power within an internationalist framework of Global South struggle. He contextualized the Movement within a global, masculinist framework of a “mighty struggle against the forces of American imperialism” and the revolutionary world of Asia’s Vietnam, the Caribbean’s Cuba, and Africa’s Tanzania. James asserted that he was not born into the world of Black Power. Rather, he came of age in the days when leaders like Lenin, Mao Zedong, Mahatma Gandhi, George Padmore, and Kwame Nkrumah forced the militaries of imperialism into retreat. He saw Black Power as being marked by the significance of political thinkers such as Fidel Castro and Julius Nyerere, whose political ideas were “second to none.”79

For James, Black Power was one of the greatest political slogans of the twentieth century; he asked his audience not to misunderstand it. Defined by Kwame Ture in 1966, Black Power was intricately linked to the struggles of the Global South and meant the complete overthrow of the global system
of capitalism. Embodied in the slogan, he asserted, were the past two hundred years of insurgency against capitalism, slavery, and racism.80

Black Power meant power to the people, to black people. In the Caribbean, the movement was marked by demographics of a black majority. Yet Black Power was not only a reference to skin color; several black leaders in the Caribbean and Africa were hostile to the concept because it meant power to the people. Even more significantly, because colonialism had increased in strength since political independence in the Caribbean, Black Power had to be anti-colonial.81

James saw black people as being in the forefront of the fight against imperialism. He challenged black youth to not “play with revolution,” arguing that mobilization of the masses was the only way to successfully resist imperial intervention after a revolution. He told his young audience that they should be prepared to “speak to the people and then go out and fight the police,” as these were revolutionary and political acts.82 Demonstrating Black Power’s relevance to the Global South were the many communications sent to Kamarakafego from groups across the globe, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization, North Korean organizations, the North Vietnamese, the Japanese Red Army, the United States Black Student Association, Guyana’s People’s Progressive Party, the United States Black Panther Party, the South African National Liberation Front, the Cuban Revolutionary Committee, and Oceanic struggles in Tahiti, New Caledonia, and the Solomon Islands further.83 Haitian exiles in Montreal denounced Duvalier and his Tontons Macoutes as being “enemies of the Haitian Revolution.” They called for the release of Haitian political prisoners, chastising Duvalier as a supporter of American imperialism even though he proclaimed being a champion of black people. Similarly, the Ethiopian Student Association in North America and World-Wide Union of Ethiopian Students referenced to the “persecution of Ethiopian students.”84 These critiques of class and imperialism were particularly important in the context of the Caribbean and Africa.

Kwame Ture wrote in support of the conference. Quoting Nkrumah, he stated that Black Power was the “struggle for the possession of economic, cultural, social and political power which [black people] in common with the oppressed of the earth” needed to have to “overthrow the oppressor.” This could only be achieved through pan-Africanism.85

Ture sent the cable from Conakry, Guinea, where he was studying with Nkrumah himself. “Osagyefo” also telegraphed “revolutionary greetings” to Bermuda. He informed the brothers, sisters, and comrades of the Black
Power movement that Bermuda’s “historic Black Power meeting” was part of “the world rebellion” of the “exploited against the exploiter” across Africa, the Americas, and “wherever Africans and people of African descent” lived. Black Power’s fight was against imperialism, international and domestic (neo)colonialism, and racism, against which blacks should unify in armed struggle. For Nkrumah, the total “unification of Mother Africa” was the prerequisite to black survival.86 Black Power activists in Bermuda agreed.

**Bermuda’s Black Beret Cadre**

The Bermuda conference signified the emergence of Black Power in Bermuda and the broader Caribbean. It was officially sponsored by the PLP’s Youth Wing, which implemented some of the resolutions of the conference. In its aftermath, Youth Wingers formed the Black Beret Cadre, which quickly established itself as Bermuda’s vanguard of Black Power.87

Led by its chief of staff, John Hilton Bassett Jr., the cadre called for a total revolution in the island, advocating revolution by any means necessary, including armed struggle if called for—“Peace if possible, compromise never, freedom by any means necessary.”88 Through political education, its Mark Albouy [Malcolm X] Liberation school, survival programs, publications, demonstrations, rallies, and low-scale urban guerrilla warfare, Berets clashed with the island’s security forces. The group formed relationships with the US Black Panther Party.89

The Cadre’s 1970 manifesto called for a revolution to end white supremacy, colonialism, and oppression, recognizing that colonialism was designed to benefit the Forty Thieves and Britain, not the black masses of the island. Based on the study of revolutionaries and black political thinkers such as Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, Frantz Fanon, Lerone Bennett, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bermuda’s Eva Hodgson, the manifesto argued that black women were historically revolutionaries, as was evidenced by the activism of such notable figures as Sally Bassett, Harriet Tubman, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, and Palestinian Leila Khaled. As such, the vanguard needed to combat male chauvinism and male superiority. It called for the development of revolutionary culture through art and literature and the mobilization of the community. It also expressed support for Third World (colonized) struggles across Latin America, Africa, Babylon (America), and Asia.90

The Cadre’s biweekly newspaper, the *Black Beret*, was replete with political art, essays, book reviews, poetry, news, and political commentary.
Labeled the Voice of the Revolutionaries (People), the publication, which was the Cadre’s primary point of contact with Bermuda’s black community, included poetry and letters of students in the group’s Liberation school.

As he had done for the Progressive Labor Party Youth Wing, Kamarakafego was an advisor to the Cadre. He attended meetings, participated in Beret functions, and critically encouraged the group. He also pushed for the Berets to make international connections. In February 1970, for example, he attended a Cadre seminar on community education and communication. Additionally, in April 1970, he co-organized a Black People’s movement rally that included some thirty students from the Cadre’s Liberation school. Kamarakafego had concerns about the tactics of the Berets. He felt that they should be more discreet and that they needed to avoid publicizing their plans, as this would alert the authorities. His approach was “If you are going to do something, just do it.”

Kamarakafego also reminded the group that geographically and politically, Bermuda was not Cuba—it did not possess a mountainous landscape like Cuba’s Sierra Maestra from which to successfully wage a guerrilla war. He suggested that they build a wider political base among Bermuda’s masses (as James had suggested) as opposed to taking direct military action against the establishment. But despite these tactical disagreements, he formed long-lasting relationships with Berets, among whom were Michelle Khal-dun and Jeanna Knight, who, as high schools students, were both PLP Youth Wingers. At age fourteen, Knight attended the Bermuda conference with her labor-activist uncle, George Desilva. She was moved by veteran activists like Queen Mother Moore as well as by younger visitors. The talks triggered her political self-awareness. She saw Moore speak several times in New York, where she visited Black Power organizations such as the East. Knight was one of a few black high school students at Mt. Saint Agnes Academy—a private, Catholic, and very much segregated school. Having first met Kamarakafego at the conference, she respected him for never biting his tongue. She soon joined the PLP Youth Wing and learned much from Kamarakafego’s leadership style as a “quiet giant.” He never diminished them as youth, but rather engaged and encouraged them to take on leadership roles. In April 1970, she went with Kamarakafego as part of a Youth Wing delegation to meet with Bermuda governor Martonmere. Driving his green sports car, he picked her up from her school. The group raised a number of concerns with the governor, who concluded that their platform contained “some really dangerous stuff.” He also claimed that Knight remarked, “We don’t want
trouble and bombings, but if we want to get something done, what else can we do?\textsuperscript{94}

In 1970, the CIA noted that the Berets blew up a church and set fire to government buildings in the 1970 uprisings. The agency was also aware that Beret Ottiwell Simmons Jr. (Chaka) was in communication with Sam Napier, who organized the national distribution of the Panther paper. Napier was assassinated in 1971.\textsuperscript{95}

In April 1970, British FCO officials declared Black Power in Bermuda to be a rapidly expanding and dangerous movement. They argued that while Black Power could not be “eradicated,” “its evil influences” needed to be “retarded.” The FCOs Intelligence Committee led the attack on Black Power. It included Bermuda’s attorney general, British police commissioner George Duckett, the head of Special Branch, a Bermuda regiment official, an army intelligence officer, UBP and government leader of Bermuda Tucker, Governor Martonmere, and the head of the FCO’s West Indian Department, A. J. Fairclough.\textsuperscript{96} Their key target was the Cadre, which they attacked via harassment, police brutality, infiltration, surveillance, and an extensive propaganda campaign.

The FCO’s IRD mounted a “sustained counter propaganda” campaign against the cadre. E. Wynne, an IRD officer, reported that the Cadre had triggered a daily philosophy of “permanent protest” among Bermuda’s black youth. He noted that the UBP refused to address genuine issues affecting blacks like police harassment, racism, and economic discrimination. Still he called for the committee to use propaganda to isolate the Cadre from the black community.\textsuperscript{97}

By June 1970, Bermuda’s Special Branch claimed to have infiltrated the Cadre. They knew that the Berets were planning a public burning of the British flag. In April, the FCO stationed a frigate in Bermuda in anticipation of a demonstration planned by Kamarakafego and the Berets in response to the trial of H. Rap Brown.\textsuperscript{98}

On August 8, 1970, Berets burned the Union Jack on the steps of Hamilton’s City Hall. This took place during a rally on a crowded Saturday afternoon. They burned the flag in indignation at Britain’s proposed sale of arms to South Africa, to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, and to protest the connections between South African apartheid and colonialism in Bermuda. The Cadre released a statement to the Bermuda Recorder, demanding that Bermuda’s government denounce these arms sales as these weapons could be used to further repress black southern Africans. “Should
the Government fail to do this,” they warned, “we will be relentless in our efforts to see that the Government receives a political consequence.”

Expecting to be attacked by the police, the Berets had stockpiled weapons, including wooden handles from shovels, axes, and tools; these were transported by car to the City Hall parking lot, where the car was parked and the weapons then hidden under the car. The plan was that if the police approached, the driver would pull away, exposing the hidden cache. The Berets were to then move to the spot, arm themselves, and fight back.

The police, however, had plans of their own. In anticipation of the demonstration, Bermuda’s government passed an Offensive Behavior Bill. Bassett was targeted; though he did not burn the flag, he was later arrested, tried, and imprisoned for offensive behavior. The Crown’s key witness was a British police officer who stated that he had not seen Bassett burn the flag but would have been “offended” if he had. The months leading up to Bassett’s trial were replete with clashes with police and arson attacks. Bassett was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

After the Cadre denounced Bassett’s arrest through the Beret, members were charged with breaking the Prohibited Publications and Seditious Intentions Bills that had been recently implemented specifically to attack the group. Jamaican lawyer and senator Dudley Thompson defended Bassett in court. For the veteran pan-Africanist, Bermuda’s promising black youth were frustrated with the island, which remained “socially and politically” in the eighteenth century.

Dressed in all black, Knight was at the flag-burning protest. Police detectives later showed up at her school, demanding to speak with her about the event. Knight had become an outspoken and significant Beret organizer; she spoke at one of the cadre’s first public rallies, held in Victoria Park. Along with Khaldun, Jennifer Smith, Wanda Perinchief, and Beverly Lottimore, she established and coordinated the Liberation School. Held on Saturdays, the school hosted at least twelve young activists weekly. The group taught them liberation songs and black history and helped them with their homework. Occasionally, they sang their songs during group walks throughout Hamilton.

The FCO used an ostensibly non-partisan and community-membered Race Relations Council to target the Cadre. In the spring of 1971, Tucker requested that the chair of the council, Reverend George Buchanan, meet with himself and Bermuda’s attorney general to discuss the appointment of an ombudsman. But during the meeting, Tucker and the attorney general asked Buchanan to have the council investigate and prepare papers on the
Cadre, its manifesto, the Liberation School, and the PLP’s newsletter, *Party Line*.¹⁰⁴

The council discussed the manifesto for months, concluding that the Berets falsely imagined they were in a struggle against colonialism. It also claimed that the manifesto was factually inaccurate, had more in common with African American freedom struggles, was thus not relative to Bermuda, and was likely written by outside persons. It argued that the manifesto ideologically bordered on Communism and used race to appeal to the “unenlightened masses.” In a report to Tucker, the council deprecated the document’s supposed “apartheid philosophy.” The government had seemingly “overestimated the intelligence of the masses,” and needed to “combat the Berets.”¹⁰⁵

Over the entire year of 1971, the council had not made any progress in its moves against the Liberation School; Knight skillfully kept the council at bay. Still, in August, the council advised Tucker not to take any action against the Cadre, as it felt that they were on the way to being “converted” via regular and fruitful meetings. Council members claimed to have gained the confidence of the Cadre and would be “damned as government stooges and narc[s]” if the group were attacked. In December, the council suggested that the government use its official resources to investigative the group, as opposed to using the council for that purpose. Buchanan still advised against action that might drive the Berets further underground.¹⁰⁶

In August, Buchanan felt that the Berets were being influenced by Black Panthers in Britain and the United States, who were prioritizing community programs over revolutionary rhetoric. Yet the council was concerned that with the recent release of Bassett from prison, they might have called for more violent action. In 1972, the council pushed to have an open forum with Bassett and the Cadre. It was then decided that a closed meeting would be better than an open discussion where the Cadre could air its views. The council suggested that they add a Beret as a member. Tucker had serious reservations about that because he felt it might grant official recognition to an underground organization.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the Cadre and its nearly seventy-five members dubbed Kamarakafego its “elder statesman.”¹⁰⁸ They respected him, even if they had tactical disagreements. In contrast to their distrust of the council’s members, Kamarakafego was a bona fide and international Black Power organizer who respected their political agency. While he was not right about everything, Kamarakafego was correct about the colonial state’s apparatus and agenda to suppress Black Power.
The US State Department claimed that it was Kamarakafego’s leadership that also drove the PLP’s strong themes of black solidarity between 1969 and 1970. In the latter part of 1970, however, Kamarakafego became less conspicuous in the party. This coincided with his activities abroad. He was the sole PLP incumbent who did not stand for the 1972 elections, and the PLP announced its regret that they had lost his services as a result of his international responsibilities. The State Department also believed the PLP’s involvement in any international or regional Black Power activities was the result of Kamarakafego’s work. Having traveled across the black world—Africa, Oceania, Cuba, and the United States—Kamarakafego was clear about the global potential of Black Power. In organizing the Bermuda conference, he was fast becoming a regional Black Power leader in the Americas. As the next chapter demonstrates, this only increased the state’s harassment of him.